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President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Agenda item 38

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/354)

Draft resolution (A/67/L.16)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/67/L.16.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): It is an honour for my country to introduce this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16).

The past year has seen a number of important milestone events for Afghanistan that have redefined and reinvigorated the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and its regional and international partners. In that context, the draft resolution sends, yet again, a positive signal of sustained support to Afghanistan, its Government and its people. We are happy to see that that message is reinforced by the outstandingly high number of delegations that have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution. Germany, as facilitator, would like to take this opportunity to briefly highlight four key messages of the draft resolution that reflect those developments.

First, the draft resolution is about transition in the field of security. We note with satisfaction that transition is progressing continuously. The implementation of the first three tranches of transition is currently unfolding. Mindful of the many challenges in the process, we are looking forward to its phased completion in the rest of the country. The mid-2013 milestone, when Afghans will be living in areas where the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have taken lead security responsibility, is a particularly encouraging step in that regard.

The focus of the draft resolution is on improving the operational capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces. At the Bonn Conference, the international community committed itself to supporting the Afghan Government throughout transition and beyond to that end. Increasing emphasis will be put on training, equipping and advising the Afghan National Security Forces as they gradually take over full security responsibility throughout the country. With a view to the end of transition at the end of 2014 and as part of the wider objective of further empowering and enabling Afghan institutions in line with the Kabul process, that is where our priority rightly belongs.

At the NATO Summit held in Chicago earlier this year, the priority to continue to develop the Afghan National Security Forces so that it is capable of providing security to all Afghans was reaffirmed. NATO allies and International Security Assistance Force partner countries committed themselves to work towards establishing a training, advising and assistance mission. They also reaffirmed their commitment to play their part in the financial sustainability of the ANSF in the long term, with a view to the assumption of increasing financial responsibility by the Government of Afghanistan.

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A stable security environment guaranteed by the Afghan National Security Forces is key to the further development of Afghanistan. In that context, long-term strategic partnership agreements concluded between the Government of Afghanistan and its partners will contribute to creating an environment conducive to establishing lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Secondly, the draft resolution is about a long-term commitment by the international community throughout the transformation decade declared by the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners at the Bonn Conference. During the past decade, Afghanistan has made notable progress in many fields of governance and development, including health, education and infrastructure.

Yet challenges remain in many fields. Afghanistan and the international community therefore renewed and reinvigorated their long-term partnership at the Tokyo Conference in July. Building on a unique framework of mutual accountability, the international community has generously pledged to provide $16 billion through 2015 to support the economic and political stabilization of Afghanistan. Furthermore, the international community will sustain its support at or near levels of the past decade through 2017.

In return, the Government of Afghanistan has committed itself to achieving its development and governance goals, such as conducting credible, inclusive and transparent elections, fostering respect for the rule of law and protecting and promoting human rights, in accordance with the stipulations of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Afghan ownership is again the foundation for the transformation decade, as clearly reflected in the principles of aid effectiveness contained in the Accountability Framework. Today, the General Assembly will send that renewed message of solidarity to our Afghan partners.

Thirdly, the draft resolution is about regional cooperation. Under the able leadership of Afghanistan and with the strong support of regional and international partners, the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan has shown continued momentum since the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference held in Kabul in June. A set of six confidence-building measures will contribute to fostering regional cooperation to enhance political, security and economic stability throughout the region.

The Istanbul Process is intended to bring greater coherence to the diversity of valuable regional initiatives. Furthermore, the Process reflects the interconnectedness of many challenges in Afghanistan. Within that framework, the fight against terrorism and against the production and trafficking of illicit drugs is complemented by confidence-building measures in the areas of education, infrastructure and economic development that are aimed at reducing poverty and creating alternative sources of income for the Afghan population.

Fourthly, the draft resolution is about support to the peace and reconciliation process. The appointment of Salahuddin Rabbani as the Chairman of the High Peace Council has revitalized the peace and reconciliation process after the heinous assassination of his father and predecessor in office.

For this Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process to yield sustainable results, it needs to be inclusive and must respect the Afghan Constitution and its human rights provisions, the rights of women in particular, as well as the set of principles outlined most recently in the Bonn Conference conclusions. In that context, the draft resolution reiterates appreciation for the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan on its path to advance the process and reaffirms the continued support of the international community in that regard. Last year, by establishing the Committee pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), the Security Council set up an institutional framework conducive to fostering the peace and reconciliation process. The first results are encouraging.

To conclude, I would like to express my gratitude to all the delegations from all regions of the world that have actively participated in this year's informal consultations on the draft resolution. Their tireless efforts and sense of responsibility are the foundation upon which the strong message of the draft resolution rests. We are therefore happy to suggest that the General Assembly once again adopt the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan by consensus.

I would like to extend my appreciation to my colleague Ambassador Zahir Tanin, as well as to Counsellor Youssof Ghafoorzai and their colleagues, for their excellent cooperation, trust and friendship.

Germany also wholeheartedly thanks the United Nations offices in Afghanistan and New York alike for their excellent work for the future of Afghanistan. The

role of the United Nations and its Assistance Mission in support of Afghanistan will continue to be pivotal in all the key areas I have outlined.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): It is an honour to be here today to discuss the situation in Afghanistan. Today we will adopt a draft resolution (A/67/L.16) that reaffirms the Assembly's commitment to Afghanistan's peace, stability and prosperity.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all representatives who contributed to the draft resolution, especially the German delegation, headed by His Excellency Ambassador Peter Wittig, for their dedication and leadership throughout the process. We extend a special thanks to Daniel Schemske for his role in facilitating the negotiations.

In 2001, following the overthrow of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was a broken State with an economy in shambles, a shattered infrastructure and a society wearied by years of conflict. Virtually no aspect of life in our country had been untouched by war. Afghanistan has come a long way since then, and yet we still have far to go. Our path to lasting peace and sustainable development has not been without its challenges. On the way forward, the supporting role of the international community will be important, and it will have a considerable effect on how successful the Afghan Government's efforts can be.

Afghanistan is approaching the end of a chapter, with the conclusion of the existing framework of international military engagement. All focus is now on the transition to Afghan-led security, governance and development.

Transition in Afghanistan did not start in a vacuum. It took us 11 years to reach this point. International involvement began over a decade ago and sought to eliminate the threat posed by Al-Qaida and its regional terrorist allies to global and regional peace and security. After long years of conflict and war, a broad international coalition became engaged, with a commitment to see Afghanistan through on its path to peace and stability.

However, it was not only a military effort. The most important thing for Afghans was to rebuild an effective State. Afghanistan started its journey a decade ago to regain a legitimate and peaceful internal and international role in the region and worldwide. Since 2001, significant achievements have been made, from the building of schools and roads to the advancement of women, continuing economic growth and the strengthening of our security forces. Today, women are playing a vital role across all sectors of Afghan society and are being offered more economic opportunities. Millions of Afghan boys and girls are enrolled in schools, and increasing numbers of Afghan people now have access to basic health services.

Afghanistan is in a fundamentally different place from where we were in 2001, a time when the control of provinces changed hands constantly, human rights were routinely violated, violence prevailed and the central authority had lost its relevance and power under the pressure of internal confrontations. Eleven years later, Afghanistan is looking to the future with hope and is aiming to stand on its feet and move towards normalization.

In April 2014, Afghanistan will hold its third presidential elections to choose its new leadership, and by the end of 2014 the last foreign combat forces will have left the country. With the election and the end of the military phase of international support, a new chapter in Afghanistan is unfolding that is characterized by consolidated national sovereignty, self-reliance and stabilization of the situation. Those simultaneous developments represent the beginning of a decade of sustainability that involves a number of vital, interconnected elements in both the short and long terms. Those include the withdrawal of tens of thousands of combat forces, the full transfer of security responsibility to the Afghan national army and police, a new arrangement of the post-2014 international military engagement, the organization of free and fair elections, reconciliation aimed at ending the violence and bringing the armed opposition into the peace process, and capacity-building for a sustainable and functioning State that is able to maintain peace, stability and democracy in the country for years to come.

The transition framework is therefore the only path to long-term stability in Afghanistan. It puts the Afghan people at the centre of managing the country's security, governance and development. For the success of that transition, we need strong long-term support and delivery from the international community.

Over the past two years, the transition process has been buttressed by the establishment of new partnerships with the international community and by attempts to turn negative potential into positive by seeking new forms of cooperation in our neighbourhood and the wider region. Afghanistan has worked

with international partners in that period to forge agreements on strategies to face the evolving situation in the country and to address all the necessary elements of a successful transition. From Lisbon to Chicago, we worked to map out the security transition. It is about enabling Afghan forces until and after 2014, sustaining logistical and financial support, and providing Afghanistan the necessary assistance for forces to work under the pressure of circumstances. Those plans are now in motion. The security transition is on track in its third tranche, during which 75 per cent of the country will be under the control of Afghan security forces. Afghan forces are ready to take full control, as planned, before the withdrawal of international forces in 2014.

We see the decision at the Chicago NATO summit — concerning shifting the role of the international military to a training, advising and assisting mission — as an important indication of enduring support for the Afghan people. Although more details are yet to be determined, it is important for Afghanistan to have the necessary guarantee of continuing military support as it assumes full responsibility for security in the country.

The post-2014 international military engagement in Afghanistan is part of the security agreement that we recently began to discuss with the United States in the light of our strategic partnership. Based on our national interests, we would like to see those negotiations lead us to an agreement that ensures long-term peace and stability in the country. The importance of national sovereignty remains at the heart of the Afghan perspective on any talks about future engagement between Afghanistan and its international partners.

A successful transition is about successful elections. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to organizing fair, free and democratic elections that can generate renewed energy for consolidating peace and stability. We would like to see the international community continue to support the upcoming election process. We are certain that the election process will help to bring about more certainty for the Afghan people with regard to the political transition. Furthermore, broader participation by the Afghan people — including women and men from all walks of life — and the engagement of civil society will contribute to making the next elections a new occasion for national consensus and unity that reflects our shared vision for building a better future.

The elections should be seen in connection with the ongoing major effort to bring about stability and end violence — the search for a political solution. We have witnessed visible progress in the peace process with the Taliban and other armed opposition groups. Serious steps are being taken to prepare the ground responsibly for peace talks and a possible breakthrough in the reconciliation process. Let there be no doubt: our peace process will not continue at the expense of the hard-won progress of the past decade, including on human rights and, in particular, the rights of women.

It is important to note that there is now consensus about the necessity for an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peaceful solution and about the fact that the peace process is increasingly seen as a cross-cutting issue required for the success of the transition. We are encouraged by the increasing positive thinking among a growing number of the armed opposition actors and by the support of other main actors for the peace process. The recent visit of the delegation of the High Peace Council to Islamabad and the release of a number of Taliban prisoners by the Government of Pakistan are important developments for creating an atmosphere conducive to a political solution.

Mr. Beck (Palau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The efforts here at the United Nations have also been essential steps towards building the necessary trust and confidence in the peace and reconciliation process. We are happy to see the continuing focus of the Security Council and the greater role that the Afghan Government now plays in the listing and delisting efforts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011). The Security Council's commitment was clearly displayed this week when the Chairman of the High Peace Council, Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani, was asked to brief that Committee and the members of the Security Council on the progress made in the reconciliation process. That was an opportunity to illustrate Afghanistan's intention to have a greater role with regard to the Committee's work.

A successful transition will allay concerns about the possible vacuum created by the end of the military phase. In that connection, what is essential in the long term is the economic sustainability of the Afghan State. Assisted by its international partners, Afghanistan is working to ensure that the Afghan State can function effectively and that it moves from a primarily aid-based

economy to a self-sustaining one during the transition and transformation period.

At the Tokyo Conference in July, significant steps were taken towards addressing that issue, including a clear expression of long-term financial commitment and the presentation of a shared vision in the form of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, which addresses the need of our Government for core funding and the need of our development partners to know that the money will be spent well. In Tokyo, the international community committed to continued engagement in Afghanistan, while the Afghan Government committed to being financially responsible and and to focus on good governance.

Ending corruption and ensuring a transparent and efficient Administration that enjoys the full trust of the Afghan people remains a high priority. In that connection, the Afghan Government has redoubled its commitment to the rule of law and good governance. His Excellency President Karzai's decree of 21 July represents a comprehensive approach and instructs all ministries, agencies and independent departments to implement measures and reforms to eliminate corruption and improve transparency.

Global engagement in the past decade has brought about an unprecedented level of regional and international interaction in Afghanistan. Afghanistan has become a meeting place for dozens of global and regional Powers and organizations. The international community has been linked to the stabilization and reconstruction efforts in the country — a fact that is reflected in the level of troop contributions, financial support and institution-building. As we complete the transition, the current form of involvement will be replaced a multitude of bilateral and multilateral cooperation arrangements between the Afghan State and its global and regional partners. With that in mind, we have begun developing various mechanisms for bringing the greater region together for political, economic and security cooperation.

At the centre of that effort is the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan. Over the course of this year, we have seen the Istanbul Process gain noteworthy momentum in its efforts to unite the Heart of Asia countries around the shared goal of peace and prosperity in Afghanistan, the region and beyond. The Istanbul Process is turning into a central forum for regional cooperation that will enhance and bring coherence to regional initiatives through the confidence-building measures and various mechanisms for cooperation to which we have committed. With effective regional cooperation, Afghanistan is reclaiming its historic role in the region, with the potential to serve as a trade and transport hub and a catalyst for broader collaboration.

Afghanistan's future is about sustainability. It is about consolidating our successes and not losing what we have worked to achieve over the past decade. For the remainder of the transition, we must not fall behind in our efforts for even a moment. The next two years are vital for the country. The Government of Afghanistan is committed to working each day to help the Afghan people by developing infrastructure, protecting human rights, enhancing good governance and improving the delivery of services, as outlined in the draft resolution we are considering here today (A/67/L.16).

However, the continuation of a violent campaign by the enemies of peace, stability and prosperity remains the greatest challenge to Afghanistan's progress. The irresponsible, vicious attacks on innocent Afghans — women and men — by the Taliban and other extremist armed groups are aiming to undermine our hard-earned achievements. But the Afghan people will not be deterred from their struggle to bring peace and security to the country and to eliminate sources of destabilization. It is important that this struggle be supported by all who want to see an end to terrorism and extremism. That is why close cooperation in the region, including with Pakistan, is essential. As President Karzai emphasized in his letter to Pakistani leaders on 13 October, there is a need for both countries to take coordinated, collaborative and serious action with strong determination against terrorism and extremism.

The Past decade in Afghanistan has seen historic strides. There are some who talk about a coming disaster as the international forces leave. We do not subscribe to such negative interpretations, but of course the future of Afghanistan hangs on many "ifs". We are realistic in recognizing the variables in the coming years, but it is our responsibility, together with the international community, to reduce uncertainties. We do not see the transition as a cliff that could be fallen off with just one false step. The transition is more than an idea. It is a concrete concept with real resources and deliberate plans — plans that can shape realities. Afghanistan looks forward to working with the international community in the coming years to achieve the noble objective of

bringing lasting peace, stability and prosperity to the country.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; the European Free Trade Association country Norway, member of the European Economic Area; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Like others, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/67/354) and the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement. I also thank all delegations that participated in the consultations on the draft resolution (A/67/L.16), introduced today by the representative of Germany. We look forward to its adoption once again by consensus.

The international conferences held in Bonn last year and in Kabul and Tokyo earlier this year, as well as the summit in Chicago, have reaffirmed the partnership between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community for Afghanistan's long-term security, economic growth and development. Those conferences have set out the way forward for Afghanistan to progressively assume responsibility for all aspects of policy and to achieve its security, development and governance goals.

In the EU statement at the Security Council debate on Afghanistan in September (see S/PV.6840), we briefly highlighted the important outcome of the Tokyo Conference, in particular the principle of mutual accountability encapsulated in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, and addressed the strategic issue of regional cooperation. The implementation of the Tokyo Framework remains paramount in achieving a successful transition in Afghanistan.

For this statement, we want to focus on two topics, namely, progress on national reconciliation, and preparations for the upcoming election.

We welcome the recent visit of the High Peace Council to Pakistan, and we call on all regional Governments to use their influence to encourage all groups to support an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. Progress will be sustainable only if the process is truly inclusive, not only engaging armed groups but fully involving civil society, including balanced regional and gender representation from all sections of Afghan society. Both the process and its outcome must respect the Afghan Constitution, including its human rights provisions, in particular those on the rights of women and girls.

We also encourage particular attention to the progressive implementation of the law on the elimination of violence against women. In that vein, we wish to reiterate our firm commitment to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and all subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security. We welcome the commitment of the Afghan Government to its full implementation through the establishment of the interministerial steering committee on resolution 1325 (2000).

We welcome the announcement of the date for the presidential election. It will be critical for Afghanistan's future that elections be as inclusive and transparent as possible and leading to an outcome that is widely accepted as legitimate.

We call on the Afghan authorities to engage all political parties and civil society in agreeing an electoral reform process that will put in place a legal framework for elections that is consistent with the Constitution, has credible measures to prevent fraud and is overseen by independent bodies. Early decisions by the relevant Afghan authorities on the system and registration process to be used for elections will be welcome, both to enable international support for the process and to allow for clear communication and voter education.

Allow me to reiterate our full support for the essential role of the United Nations as we move beyond transition. Its work will be of key importance in supporting the preparations for the upcoming elections and for monitoring the human rights and humanitarian situation and making coordination bodies such as the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board work more effectively.

It is important that the international community remain strongly committed to progress in Afghanistan. That will require sustained support beyond 2014.

The EU commitment to Afghanistan is long-term. The EU is currently providing more than €1 billion

in development assistance to Afghanistan annually. We will continue to prioritize and enhance support to Afghanistan in the decade of transformation agreed at Bonn.

The aim of our overall strategy in Afghanistan remains clear, namely, supporting a successful transition process in Afghanistan, partnering with Afghanistan beyond transition on its path towards becoming fully self-reliant, and building a more peaceful, democratic and prosperous society for the benefit of all Afghans.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): It gives me great pleasure to speak today as a Chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on behalf of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and my own country, the Kyrgyz Republic.

The situation in Afghanistan affects global and regional peace and stability, as the matter of counter-terrorism is one of the important issues on which the international community and countries of the region are focusing their attention. Thanks to the strong support of the international community, the situation concerning political reconciliation and economic reconstruction in Afghanistan is changing. The country's economy is showing progress. Infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, bridges and power transmission lines, has made headway, and health and education have improved.

Yet, we must not overlook the difficulties and challenges that Afghanistan still faces in the course of reconstruction. There is no marked improvement in the security situation. Terrorist activities continue unabated, as seen in the terrorist activity by the Taliban, Al-Qaida forces and other extremists. Illicit drug production and trafficking are still rampant. Tension and internal conflicts in Afghanistan remain primary sources of threats to regional security and stability. We urge the Government of Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to combat the Afghanistan narcotics threat more vigorously, especially in view of the undeniable fact that drug trafficking has become a major source of funding for terrorist activities in Afghanistan.

As SCO member States are all neighbours of Afghanistan, we closely follow the developments in that country and support the development of bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and countries of the region. The SCO member States support the efforts to make Afghanistan an independent, neutral, peaceful and prosperous country that is free of terrorism and drug-related crime. Our countries are of the view that the national reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned. That process is an important component of any Afghan settlement.

We also support the Afghan Government-led peace process, which aims at promoting dialogue with those elements in opposition to the Government that have renounced violence, broken ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, denounced terrorism and accepted the Afghan Constitution, in full respect of the implementation of measures and procedures introduced by the Security Council in its resolutions 1267 (1999), 1988 (2011) and 1989 (2011) and other relevant Council resolutions.

We have consistently supported the peaceful reconstruction of the country and have over the years provided all feasible support and assistance to the Afghan people. The SCO member States are ready to assist with the reconstruction of Afghanistan, including through the implementation of infrastructure, energy and transport projects, with a view to promoting sustainable economic growth and the creation of jobs in Afghanistan.

It gives me pleasure to inform the Assembly that the SCO member States have decided to grant Afghanistan observer status in the SCO. While emphasizing the futility of attempting to resolve the Afghan conflict by military means, SCO member States call upon the international community to continue to scale up its support and assistance to Afghanistan, as part of the comprehensive measures to tackle both the symptoms and root causes of the problems connected with the reconstruction of that country, which include enhancing capacities, improving the people's well-being and strengthening ownership and self-development capacities.

In the security field, the international community should continue to foster conditions that could enable the Afghan Government to shoulder security responsibilities. In the economic field, the international community should honour its commitment to assist Afghanistan's economic and social development. In the area of governance, the international community should help to enhance human resource development, while maintaining full respect for the right of the Afghan people to independently choose their political model of governance. The SCO member States will continue to

strengthen and upgrade regional cooperation within the SCO framework and other existing relevant regional formats in order to build the SCO region into one of lasting peace, friendship, prosperity and harmony.

The situation in Afghanistan is now at a crucial stage. The SCO member States support the central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts on Afghanistan and will assist the Afghan people with their national reconstruction. The SCO appreciates the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) aimed at fulfilling its mission and supports UNAMA in providing further necessary assistance for peace and for the reconstruction of the country within its mandate. It is the sincere hope of the SCO member States that a peaceful, stable, independent, sovereign and neutral Afghanistan that enjoys development, progress and friendship with its neighbours will emerge at an early date.

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), that is, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan. The CSTO member States have carefully followed the situation in Afghanistan, which borders the organization's area of responsibility. We are seriously concerned about the escalating tensions in the country. We support Afghanistan's efforts to become a peaceful, independent and neutral State that is free from terrorism and narcotic drugs.

CSTO member States will help to foster Afghanistan's sustainable and secure development with a view to reducing the threats to international security from that country, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and religious extremism, among others. We note the importance of CSTO capacities in countering such threats from Afghanistan.

CSTO member States consider the illicit production, trade and trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan to be a threat to international peace and security. We intend to step up efforts to combat the Afghan drugs threat in line with the decisions of the third Ministerial Conference of the Paris Pact, held in Vienna on 16 February, while making use of the capacities of the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC) in combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors, as well as while working together through the CSTO-led counter-narcotics Operation Kanal. We look forward to consistent efforts on the part of the Afghan Government and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) aimed at addressing the challenges related to drug production and trafficking. We stand ready to cooperate closely with NATO on a broad range of issues, including combating the drugs threat.

CSTO member States believe that the international community, under the auspices of the United Nations, should play an active and effective role in the political settlement process and in the recovery of Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the Afghan Government. We support the Government's efforts to strengthen Afghan society and transform the country into a stable democratic State. Member States support Afghanistan's active involvement in regional integration processes and in efforts to strengthen mutual trade and economic and humanitarian cooperation, as well as the swift implementation of infrastructure projects aimed at linking the region with Afghanistan, which will help to restore peace, stability and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan.

CSTO member States welcome the decisions adopted at the Bonn and Istanbul Conferences on Afghanistan in 2011, the fifth conference on regional economic cooperation for Afghanistan, held in Dushanbe, the Kabul Conference and this year's economic conference in Tokyo. We underscore the important role played by CSTO member States in conveying air and land transit cargo to meet the needs of ISAF forces in Afghanistan.

We support the process of national reconciliation in the country. It is our view, however, that intra-Afghan dialogue can have a positive effect only if a leading role in the process belongs to the Afghan Government and if there is strict compliance by the insurgents with three basic principles, namely, they must lay down their weapons, recognize the Afghan Constitution and definitively break their ties with Al-Qaida and other extremist organizations. We believe that following the completion of the stabilization efforts in Afghanistan, ISAF's withdrawal should take place pursuant to a decision of the Security Council based on a report on the implementation of its mandate.

We note the role of other regional organizations, primarily the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), in addressing the challenges with regard to military and political stabilization and economic recovery in Afghanistan, as well as the efforts of CARICC to combat illicit drug trafficking based

on Afghan production. We welcome Afghanistan's receiving observer status in the CSO and CARICC.

Mr. Aslov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Allow me to express my gratitude to the President for convening this meeting of the General Assembly.

Tajikistan aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on behalf of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), respectively.

Tajikistan was pleased, once again, to join the sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.16, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan". We hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus. Allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the German delegation for its work in achieving agreement on the text of the draft resolution.

Today, Afghanistan is at a critical juncture in its modern history. By the end of 2014, the transition process should be completed. Following the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghan law-enforcement bodies should be able to shoulder full responsibility for security in the country. Indeed, at this important and complex stage, the international community should provide Afghanistan with its full support.

Tajikistan is connected to Afghanistan by many historic and cultural links. Along those lines, our country is seeking to further strengthen good-neighbourly relations with Afghanistan and to develop and step up our bilateral, mutually beneficial cooperation. We support the international strategy for a comprehensive settlement and the post-conflict recovery of Afghanistan. In that context, we wholeheartedly support the Afghan Government's efforts to achieve the goals of national reconciliation. We welcome the efforts of the international community, particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the International Security Assistance Force, to establish lasting peace and stability in that long-suffering land.

An important factor in ensuring sustainable socioeconomic development in Afghanistan is to get the country involved in the process of regional integration through economic and trade cooperation with neighbouring States. In that connection, I should like to note the role of the Dushanbe quartet, composed of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Russia and Tajikistan, within whose framework efforts are being made to improve regional trade and economic cooperation and to counter the threats of terrorism, drugs and organized crime, as well as to develop human resources for Afghanistan's military and civilian needs. Tajikistan is actively involved in the process of establishing sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Given Afghanistan's need to develop human resources for law-enforcement and military bodies and to train professional specialists, my country has provided opportunities for training border officers and law-enforcement and security personnel in centres in Tajikistan, particularly the regional college of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

More than 500 Afghan students are currently enrolled in higher-education institutions in Tajikistan. In accordance with a decision of the Government of Tajikistan, grants will be awarded to approximately 1,000 Afghan citizens through 2025. Moreover, in recognition of the fundamental importance of developing education and training specialists for the needs of the economy in Afghanistan and the region, Tajikistan has launched the establishment on its own territory of a multidisciplinary professional and technical educational training centre.

Thanks to its favourable geographic location, Afghanistan can play a highly important role in developing regional integration processes. In the context of globalization, the significance of Afghanistan's geographic position at the crossroads between the various regions of the Asian continent can only expand. In that connection, Tajikistan fully supports the development and implementation of infrastructure projects in the areas of communications and transportation, both in Afghanistan and in the region in general. Tajikistan and Afghanistan are currently linked by five bridges spanning the border along the Panj River. That enables the delivery of humanitarian assistance and other cargo to remote areas of Afghanistan. It also helps to promote the growing trade between our two countries, as well as to expand transit capacity. A projected railroad between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, which would also link to an existing Uzbekistan-Afghanistan branch and to two prospective Iran-Afghanistan and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan branches, has undergone international evaluation and is awaiting implementation. The route is destined to become a transit artery of regional significance that will promote the development of regional trade and economic recovery for Afghanistan.

In the current circumstances, energy is of key importance for rebuilding Afghanistan's devastated economy. The hydroelectric plants currently operating in Tajikistan, as well as those under construction, are capable not only of meeting Afghanistan's needs for ecologically clean and affordable electric power but also of broadening its agricultural development by restoring and improving its irrigation systems. In that context, I should like to note the special importance of building power-transmission-line projects through Afghanistan. Last year a 220-kilovolt transmission line began operating from Tajikistan's Sangtuda-1 hydroelectric power station to the Afghan city of Puli Khumri. The CASA-1000 trade and transmission project has been launched to help solve the problem of the shortage of power in Afghanistan and Pakistan by using the hydroelectric potential of Central Asian countries. We support the projected gas pipeline to be laid from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Tajikistan and Pakistan, which, besides supplying the natural-gas needs of the countries of the region, would also create a reliable source of income for Afghanistan.

The issue of Afghanistan's socioeconomic recovery was covered in depth at the fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held in Dushanbe in the spring. The Conference recommended the implementation of about 20 projects in the areas of transportation, communications, energy, investment, education, building human capacity, border control and other areas, which could contribute to Afghanistan's restoration and socioeconomic development. Establishing significant levels of peace and security in Afghanistan will depend on broad and effective international and regional cooperation and sincere, consistent efforts on the part of the international community to achieve goals that meet the aspirations and expectations of the Afghan people. We hope that the adoption of today's draft resolution by the General Assembly will serve that noble purpose.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): At the outset, I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan, contained in document A/67/354.

The year 2014 will see two significant events that will shape the next stage of Afghanistan's future. One is the complete withdrawal of the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF); the second is the presidential elections. They are equally important and should be looked at as two sides of the same coin.

On the one side, security in Afghanistan is a prerequisite for the success of political and economic reconstruction and transformation processes across the board. In that regard, Malaysia is encouraged that there have been fewer security incidents and insurgent attacks this year as compared with 2011. However, the figures are certainly not encouraging enough. The killing of civilians and the targeting of prominent individuals remain a concern. The international community must look at ways to counter such incidents. In doing so, it must take special care not to give further reasons for people to turn away from the transition process and join the insurgents. Civilian deaths resulting from military operations by international forces must be avoided at all costs. In fact, any civilian casualties will create resentment and fuel anger among the people, making efforts to ensure peace and security that much harder.

On the flip side, fair elections that are inclusive and free from external interference will ensure a competent Government that enjoys the support of the people. The Government can then concentrate on efforts to establish good governance, promote justice, human rights and respect for the rule of law, and foster equitable social and economic development in the country. That in turn will plant the seeds for lasting peace and stability from within Afghanistan itself.

Malaysia appreciates the continued support that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has given to the work of the High Peace Council and the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. We welcome the appointment of Salahuddin Rabbani, who has emphasized the need to improve inclusiveness in the High Peace Council. Malaysia is heartened to note that the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to engage with insurgents in order to rehabilitate and reintegrate them into society have borne fruit. We believe that rehabilitated insurgents can help the Government in its efforts to restore peace through their active participation as local community leaders.

Malaysia is of the view that inclusiveness also needs to be extended to women. By getting the support of women, the Government would, in effect, further marginalize those who are out to create instability in the country. Furthermore, women would contribute immensely to development efforts. To neglect such a huge percentage of the population would only mean underutilizing the potential human capital available in the country. Afghanistan certainly cannot afford to do that.

Malaysia understands the need to take into account the cultural and traditional sensitivities in Afghanistan, which are based on religious beliefs. It is the same for Malaysia. We continue to take various measures towards achieving gender equality and women's development through various policy frameworks, legislation, capacity-building and entrepreneurial programmes. Malaysia wishes to emphasize the importance of women's education and health care and the need to change the widely accepted stereotypical roles of men and women in society, all the while taking into consideration the need to protect the sanctity of Islam. In that regard, we believe that Malaysia has much to offer, and we are willing to share our experience.

Many impediments remain in the run-up to 2014. It is obvious that the Afghan Government will need the assistance of the international community in its efforts to forge a better future for its people. We are pleased to note the success of the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan last July, which saw the international community pledge $16 billion in development aid over the next four years. The number of high-level representatives and the financial commitments made at the Conference send a clear message to those who intend to derail the transition and transformation process that Afghanistan will not be abandoned and will enjoy the support of the international community.

For our part, Malaysia will identify the specific areas of assistance and cooperation that we are able to extend to Afghanistan and its people under the Malaysia Technical Assistance Programme, with particular focus on capacity-building and human resource development. In addition, 40 members of the Malaysian Armed Forces medical contingent for the International Security Assistance Force, which includes women doctors and nurses, were deployed in July 2010 to provide medical, dentistry and other health-care services and capacity-building programmes to the Afghan people in Bamyan province. The team has managed to take local social and religious sensitivities into consideration while providing health-care services.

Malaysia has also been providing assistance in the reconstruction of Afghanistan over the past 10 years through various bilateral technical training and capacity-building programmes in a broad range of areas. We are pleased to note that a number of Afghan officials have benefited from the many technical courses that Malaysia has offered. In 2011 and 2012, Malaysia has contributed a total of nearly $14 million in humanitarian assistance and capacity-building programmes to Afghanistan.

Malaysia is cautiously optimistic about the situation in Afghanistan. We recognize that the next few years will be crucial for the future of the country. While we support full Afghan leadership and ownership, the international community must take steps to ensure that when ISAF leaves, the foundations have been put in place to allow Afghanistan to move forward. The international community must also ensure that the transition of power to the next President is done smoothly.

Progress has been made and we should capitalize on it. Afghanistan cannot afford to fall back into the despair of war. Malaysia will do its utmost to support Afghanistan's reconciliation and reconstruction process. We look forward to continuing to play a meaningful role in Afghanistan's development towards lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): The United Arab Emirates supports the draft resolution before the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16). We reiterate our support for all Afghan national efforts to expand the process of constructive and inclusive Afghan-led dialogue and reconciliation, including all segments of the populations and all political parties in the process, in order to achieve national unity, stability and long-term development. We also support the good offices conducted in that regard by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Mission of Norway and the Afghanistan-Pakistan Joint Commission for Reconciliation and Peace.

In that context, we emphasize the need for the international community to adopt an innovative approach in providing more inclusive development support to Afghanistan in the economic, logistical and technical fields. Such inclusive support should be under the supervision of the United Nations and done in cooperation with international organizations, donor countries and other concerned parties to promote stability, strengthen national capacities and sreolve the internal problems of Afghanistan, as well as to organize, reform and develop its national institutions. That will enable Afghanistan, through its institutions, to carry out its full responsibilities, meet the needs of its people, consolidate security and enhance law enforcement.

In that regard, we welcome the gradual transition of security tasks to the Afghan National Security Forces,

in accordance with the Kabul process, especially in the matter of extending their control over all regions of the country, preserving national security and achieving economic and social development by the time of the withdrawal of most foreign troops in 2014.

We would also like to stress the importance of the region's role in achieving security and stability in Afghanistan. The region should seek to put in place an inclusive package of security cooperation, confidence-building measures and multilateral support in several areas, such as reconstruction, health and education and in combating terrorism, extremism and the production and trafficking of drugs. We also look forward to further initiatives of cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries in the areas of security, the economy and trade. In that context, we welcome the ongoing, constructive bilateral cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The United Arab Emirates has stood by the Afghan people from the very onset of their crisis. Over the past 10 years, we have continued to provide political and economic support through direct bilateral cooperation and as part of the international community. Our assistance aims to support the implementation of infrastructure projects in Afghanistan, including economic recovery projects and reconstruction, rehabilitation and development programmes in the health, agricultural, social and security sectors. We also support other multipurpose charitable projects aimed at restoring security and stability in all parts of the country, reducing the suffering of its people and improving all aspects of their lives.

The total contributions by the Government of the United Arab Emirates to Afghanistan since the year 2000 to advance its national economy amount to approximately $272 million dollars. That is in addition to private assistance from United Arab Emirates humanitarian foundations, including the Sheikh Khalifa Foundation, which, in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, made an estimated contribution of $100 million, earmarked for the mass immunization programme for Afghan children. Also, in July, the United Arab Emirates announced a grant of $250 million dollars, 80 per cent of which is earmarked for building houses for Afghans, including widows, orphans and the disabled, as well as for other development projects and the rehabilitation of a number of institutions in Kabul and other provinces.

The United Arab Emirates also participated in the implementation of several governmental and non-governmental projects in Afghanistan. They include the construction of training centres, road projects and infrastructure rebuilding, particularly in the areas of education and rural development. We participate as well in a demining project in Kandahar, which is expected to be completed within four years at a cost of $28 million. The United Arab Emirates also contributed to the international military efforts through the International Security Assistance Force of NATO for the purpose of reconstructing Afghanistan and providing support and assistance to its people.

We highly appreciate the considerable efforts made by the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, under the command of NATO and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as by other partners of the international community, to restore security and stability in Afghanistan and improve the quality of life of its people. However, we call for focusing international action on accelerating the work of the implementation mechanisms of the country's national comprehensive development strategy in order to develop the capacities of the key sectors in Afghanistan so as to enable them to meet the needs of the people and to consolidate peace, growth and stability in all provinces. That should include restoring Afghanistan's traditional place both in the region and in the international community.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): Italy aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the observer of the European Union and would like to make a few remarks in its national capacity.

We welcome the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16) and support its adoption by consensus. In doing so, we confirm our appreciation of the substantial contribution the United Nations is making to the stabilization of Afghanistan. Italy values the continued efforts that the Secretary-General and his Special Representative are promoting to that end and reiterates its full and convinced support for their work. We also commend the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in leading and coordinating the civilian efforts of the international community, the importance of which will grow as the military commitment gradually diminishes.

Over the past year, a series of important conferences has allowed the international community and Afghanistan to better define the terms of their

relationship, which will go well beyond the transition process throughout what is known as the transformation decade. Afghanistan has made remarkable progress over the past 10 years in such fields as institutional capacity, economic growth, the enhancement of human rights and the development of its security forces. However, much remains to be done, and international support is still needed. That is why Italy fully supports the strong, credible, unequivocal message that has emerged from the meetings held in Bonn, Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo, that is, the international community will not abandon Afghanistan after 2014.

As for our national contribution, through a decade-long presence, Italy has shown its steadfast commitment to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Over the past months, we have stated our intention to stand by Afghanistan in a long-term perspective beyond 2014. The bilateral partnership agreement signed last January is the cornerstone of a relationship that will be based less on assistance and more on mutual commitments and cooperation on an equal footing.

I would like to make three comments.

First, while our Afghan friends must feel reassured in this perspective, it is equally important to highlight that a new, more mature and more demanding partnership is being forged. At the Tokyo Conference all parties undertook substantial commitments: on the one hand, the international community will continue to assure its financial and political support of Afghanistan; on the other, the Afghan Government is expected to make further progress in such areas as democratic reforms, transparency, good governance, and the protection and promotion of human rights, in particular women's rights.

As expressed on several occasions, Italy considers the issue of women's conditions a top priority. We recognize the tangible progress that the Afghan Government has made in that domain, enhancing the status of women in such important areas as education and political participation. Those hard-won gains now need to be preserved and further consolidated. We also believe that the full inclusion of women in Afghan society, on the basis of opportunities and rights equal to those of men, as stated in article 22 of the Afghan Constitution, will help Afghanistan achieve its development and security goals.

Secondly, the time has come for Afghanistan to turn over a new leaf in its history and overcome decades of conflict and turbulence. The success of the reconciliation process among the many ethnic and political components of Afghan society is a prerequisite for building long-term stabilization and lasting peace. We therefore encourage the efforts of the Afghan Government to advance this process. We believe that sustainable reconciliation can be achieved only through an inclusive, nationwide, collective commitment to peace, with the full participation of women and civil society, particularly in light of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

Thirdly, the success of the reconciliation process is key not only to the stabilization and prosperity of Afghanistan, but also to the stability of the region as a whole. While fully respecting Afghan ownership of the peace process, we believe that the regional environment could help create the conditions for its positive advancement. In that regard, we appreciate the recent visit of a delegation of the High Peace Council to Pakistan, as it represents an important step forward in regional dialogue and is a sign of a common will to re-energize the process.

In the same spirit, we prize the initiatives aimed at enhancing regional cooperation with Afghanistan. In particular, we are encouraged by the progress achieved so far within the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan, under the commendable leadership of the Afghan Government. We expect the action plans for the first set of confidence-building measures to be finalized soon so that their implementation can begin, and we reaffirm Italy's readiness to contribute to those measures concerning counter-narcotics and regional infrastructure. Meanwhile, a structured and genuine political dialogue among the countries of the Heart of Asia initiative remains a key component of the process, as it can strengthen mutual trust.

The upcoming elections represent a crucial test for the fledgling Afghan democracy. We are encouraged by the commitment shown by the Afghan Government, and we welcome the recent announcement of the date of the elections as an important step forward. It is of the utmost importance to guarantee the credibility, inclusiveness and transparency of the whole electoral process, so as to lead up to a legitimate and broadly accepted outcome.

Let me conclude by recalling the importance of today's draft resolution. The international community is speaking with one voice and the message it is delivering is clear, that is, the stabilization of Afghanistan remains a priority and the Afghan people can count on international support for the years to come. The year 2014 is not the end date of international commitment, but a turning point towards a future that is more and more in the hands of the Afghan people and Government.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): Japan is pleased to sponsor the draft resolution (A/67/L.16) before us. The unity of the international community in supporting Afghanistan is of particular importance for the long-term stability of the country. Adopting the draft resolution by consensus would send a strong message reaffirming that point. Sincere appreciation is due to our colleagues from the German delegation, who ably led the consultations throughout the entire process.

Over the past year we have indeed witnessed a series of important international conferences with decisive outcomes based on both the Afghan Government's determination to secure long-term stability and the long-term commitments of its international partners beyond 2014. Building on the outcomes from the Bonn Conference, the NATO Chicago Summit, the Kabul Ministerial Conference and the Tokyo Conference, Afghanistan now has a road map before it leading towards a stable future with economic growth.

Given that political and development momentum, I would like to stress the following three points, which are critical to the lasting peace and stability of the country.

First, in the belief that the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework serves as the driving force for allowing Afghanistan to achieve its political and development goals, Japan strongly urges the Government to continue making the utmost efforts to realize its commitments for a stronger and more accountable Government, as stated in the Tokyo Framework. In that connection, we welcome the Afghan Government's follow-up initiatives led by the Ministry of Finance and look forward to seeing concrete actions and tangible outcomes on the ground to follow.

Secondly, the road map before us will not bear fruit as planned unless it is reinforced by the sustained political will of the Afghan Government to proceed with the peace and reconciliation process.

Needless to say, this entire course is inseparably related to the improvement of the security situation through the building up of the Afghan National Security Forces and the advancement of the reintegration process. They must therefore be addressed in a simultaneous and effective manner in order to achieve irreversible progress. Given the final timeline for the security transition, there is no more time to lose.

The peace and reconciliation process is an Afghan-led process. Japan supports the High Peace Council's active efforts in leading dialogues with the relevant parties and especially welcomes the developments and outcome of the recent visit of Mr. Rabbani, Chairman of High Peace Council, to Pakistan. It is also encouraging to see other actors, including non-governmental and civilian institutions, being engaged in the process as well, as we believe that such initiatives, when well coordinated, could effectively complement the High Peace Council's activities.

Last but not least, we cannot stress enough the importance of the upcoming presidential elections in April 2014. The elections will be a testimony to all the efforts and achievements of the Government of Afghanistan and its people in all spheres. A wide range of interlinked challenges persist, including concerning security control, electoral law reforms, the elimination of fraud, an efficient voter registration system, inclusiveness, and others that should be addressed by the Afghan leadership with the continued support of the international community, headed by the United Nations. We strongly hope that the election results will lend much stronger legitimacy to the Government of Afghanistan and allow the desired advancement towards prosperity.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our determination to exert our fullest efforts for the peace and stability of Afghanistan as a Member of the United Nations and the unified international community. Let us adopt this draft resolution by consensus, without hesitation.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): The United States is pleased to join other Member States in sponsoring the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16). The draft resolution reflects the fact that the international community remains committed to supporting the Afghan people in building a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan through the 2014 security and political transition and beyond.

We recognize the continued service of the United Nations in Afghanistan. We also commend the brave and dedicated work of the Afghan National Security Forces, the International Security Assistance Force and United Nations personnel who are helping to build a more secure Afghanistan.

Since we met last year, the Afghan people and the international community have continued on the path towards a responsible security transition and an enduring commitment to Afghanistan. The meetings in Bonn, Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo clarified the path ahead. The transition is on track and the international community's long-term commitment to Afghanistan is resolute.

Afghanistan and international partners have charted a responsible road for the transfer of full responsibility for security back to the Afghans. The Afghan National Security Forces continue to grow in size and capability and should reach their goal of being 352,000-strong this year. The Afghan army is fighting in over 90 per cent of all operations and is leading nearly half of them. Through the third tranche of the security transition, 75 per cent of the Afghan population, including every provincial capital, will be part of the transition process. The NATO Summit in May confirmed that the progress will be supported by the international community beyond 2014. NATO and its potential operational partners will continue to provide training, assistance and advisory capacity as Afghanistan moves into the transformation decade.

Afghanistan's future will be realized not only by a strong, capable security force but also by the Afghan people's access to economic opportunity and a Government that meets their needs. The international community's total pledges in Tokyo of $16 billion in economic assistance through 2015 meet the World Bank's estimate of Afghanistan's requirements, just as the Chicago Summit met its security requirements. That assistance will help Afghanistan attract private-sector investment and help usher in a transformation decade marked less by aid and more by trade — all in a framework of mutual accountability, regional economic integration and shared responsibility.

The security and economic progress will further be bolstered by a region that sees value in peace. Afghanistan's neighbours and near neighbours have spoken in one voice to assure Afghanistan of their support for an Afghan-led reconciliation process. They endorsed the principles that need to guide peace and reconciliation at the Kabul Conference that was held over the summer in support of the Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan.

Accompanying the security transition in 2014 will be a political transition. We welcome President Karzai's recent decision that elections will be held in April of 2014, and we also note the strong commitments made by the Afghan Government to strengthen and improve its electoral processes. That constitutional transfer of power through a credible and inclusive presidential election will be critical to maintaining stability and preserving support from international donors.

Afghanistan today shows the tangible effects of the efforts we all have made over the past decade. Kabul is now a commercial centre of over 5 million people. Schooling and primary health care have been transformed. According to UNICEF, 10 years ago fewer than 1 million Afghan children attended school and today more than 8.2 million children will receive an education, 3 million of whom are girls. Child mortality rates have fallen by half, and the number of health facilities has tripled.

The United Nations role in that process remains indispensable. In supporting regional diplomacy and through its development and humanitarian assistance role in Afghanistan, the United Nations continues to make a difference in the lives of the Afghan people. Countries of the region, together with the broader international community, have come together with the Afghan people in support of Afghanistan's future. In Bonn, Chicago, Kabul and Tokyo we made the necessary commitment to realize that future. We applaud those efforts and support the Afghan people in that process.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I wish to thank the German delegation for the excellent work it has done in steering the negotiations on today's draft resolution (A/67/L.16). I also thank the Government of Afghanistan for its constructive engagement in the process throughout.

Today, I will focus on what the United Kingdom considers to be the key issues ahead in Afghanistan: first, the security transition from NATO to Afghan forces; secondly, the Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process; thirdly, the 2014 Afghan elections; and, fourthly, the long-term international commitment to Afghanistan.

First, with regard to transition, 2014 is drawing near. NATO continues the important work of handing over security to the Afghan National Security Forces. The United Kingdom remains confident in the ability of all parties to get that done within the agreed timescale. We are confident because transition is working well and is on track. The Afghan National Security Forces are growing in strength and capability. They are taking responsibility for their own security and doing so with enthusiasm and professionalism. But we have always recognized that there is no purely military solution to the situation in Afghanistan, which is why peace and reconciliation remain key.

The objective remains the same: we support the Afghan Government in its attempts to secure a peaceful political settlement and agree that that should be done in unity with key partners in the region. The Security Council's renewal of the sanctions regime established under resolution 1988 (2011) next month will be an opportunity to contribute further to this process. We must ensure that designated individuals can travel to participate in reconciliation talks and that the designation criteria focus specifically on those who pose a threat to Afghanistan's security.

Secondly, it is imperative that we continue to build on the momentum and achievements to date. The United Kingdom therefore welcomes the visit of the Afghan High Peace Council to Pakistan earlier this month. We understand that the talks they held were very productive, and we are encouraged by the clear commitment of both parties to the peace and reconciliation process. We welcome in particular the call to the Taliban and other armed opposition groups to participate in the peace process and to sever links with Al-Qaida and other international terrorist networks. The United Kingdom will continue to do all it can to support efforts by Pakistan and Afghanistan to strengthen their cooperation on this important issue.

Thirdly, the elections planned for 5 April 2014 will bring many challenges, but we cannot underestimate their importance. The United Kingdom looks forward to credible and inclusive elections that deliver a peaceful transition of power to a Government decided by the people of Afghanistan. They will demand nothing less, and the international community should strongly support that objective. To achieve those aspirations, transparency is key. We encourage the Government of Afghanistan to tackle the issues that have overshadowed previous elections and ensure that the prospects for voter fraud and violent incidents are reduced.

Finally, let me reiterate the long-term commitment of the United Kingdom to Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will continue to build on our excellent security partnership, to further social and economic ties and to form closer cultural links with Afghanistan. The Enduring Strategic Partnership document, agreed by the United Kingdom and Afghanistan earlier this year, provides the basis for those ambitions.

The international community as a whole has made clear its enduring commitment to Afghanistan. We are pleased that the draft resolution before the General Assembly today (A/67/L.16) is another signal of that. The NATO Chicago Summit, followed by the Tokyo Conference, provided clear evidence of that commitment. The pledges made on both occasions demonstrated the seriousness with which we are approaching post-2014 Afghanistan. The United Kingdom will continue to meet the obligations into which we have entered, and we are committed to ensuring that all parties do likewise. In particular, we strongly support the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework as an invaluable mechanism to manage the commitments of the international community and Afghanistan to each other.

Finally, the United Nations has a crucial and enduring role to play in Afghanistan. We will continue to ensure that it has the right people, the right objectives and appropriate resources to carry out its important work.

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): I would like to thank the President for having convened this important debate, which provides the General Assembly an annual opportunity to review the progress made towards peace, stability and development in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan needs the continued and active engagement of the United Nations and its Member States. We hope that today's meeting and this year's draft resolution (A/67/L.16), which Pakistan is pleased to be a sponsor of, will strengthen our collective commitment to Afghanistan.

After the decade-long endeavours of the international community for State-building in Afghanistan, the country is poised to assume full responsibility for its security and governance. The transition process initiated after the 2010 Kabul Conference generated the optimism of having a destination in sight. Since

then, Afghanistan's progress in assuming greater responsibilities is discernible. Further progress on transition will require sustained engagement by the international community. This year's Chicago Summit and Tokyo Conference outlined the framework for such engagement. It is important for all pledges to be honoured and translated into action. There should be no repeat of a situation whereby Afghanistan is left to fend for itself.

This year, the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was reviewed with a view to aligning it with the transition process. We hope that will allow UNAMA to play a more productive role.

The Afghan Government's greater control of territory is encouraging. It can enhance public perception of greater security and confidence in institutional structures, which is critical for long-term stability.

The Secretary-General's latest report (A/67/354) includes an assessment of post-2014 Afghanistan. We agree that security and humanitarian risks associated with the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force must be addressed in a forthright manner. Four decades of war have made it clear that the vexing question of Afghan security does not lend itself to military solutions. Only a comprehensive approach can change the underlying dynamics of a deep-seated cycle of conflict. The Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process is a manifestation of that realization. It rightly seeks to address the root causes of insecurity and tackles the fundamental nature of conflict in Afghanistan.

We believe that the sustainability of the peace process will be ensured if all stakeholders share the goal of reconciliation. Afghanistan's international partners should facilitate such a convergence.

Externally imposed, impracticable caveats complicate the peace process. Similarly, the idea of coerced reconciliation runs counter to a fundamental lesson of Afghan history.

Pakistan supports an Afghan-led peace process. We fully support the efforts of the Afghan High Peace Council under the able leadership of Mr. Salahuddin Rabbani.

Pakistan has always emphasized the importance of regional unity to deal with challenges of security and development in Afghanistan. Immediate neighbours have a special role in the stability of Afghanistan. Pakistan is engaged in a number of important regional initiatives on Afghanistan that aim to foster greater regional connectivity in order to promote economic and commercial cooperation as well as root out narcotics, terrorism and extremism.

Pakistan organized this month's regional ministerial conference on counter-narcotics, in which 13 countries participated. The conference declaration seeks to establish a regional contact group on counter-narcotics as part of a comprehensive regional approach. It charts a concrete road map based on agreed timelines.

Pakistan's bilateral relations with Afghanistan are driven by a sense of shared destiny. Our cooperation spans the entire spectrum of political, economic, education and cultural relations. There are regular exchanges of visits and continuous dialogue, including at the highest levels.

Pakistan is engaged in several reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan, including the construction of hospitals, roads and educational institutions. In 2010 Pakistan doubled the number of scholarships offered to Afghan students for higher education. Our official bilateral trade with Afghanistan stands at approximately $2 billion annually. The target to enhance it to $5 billion by 2015 is well within reach.

In the area of security, Pakistan has sought closer engagement with Afghanistan and its international partners on real issues that lie beyond polemics. We need further consolidation of our security and intelligence cooperation through the Tripartite Commission, which also includes the United States and the International Security Assistance Force.

The interdiction of illegal cross-border movements is vital to countering the menaces of terrorism, drug trafficking and commercial smuggling. It is a joint responsibility that needs to be discharged more vigorously. Recently, Pakistan further enhanced its security presence on its side of the international border with Afghanistan, through new check-posts and regular patrolling. Our deployments along the international border far exceed the number of international and Afghan forces present on the other side. The presence of security forces on the Afghan side of the border needs to be enhanced. Effective measures should be in place to prevent cross-border attacks on our border posts, security patrols and border villages. The leaders

of the two countries have resolved to address such matters using appropriate forums and channels. We hope that recent bilateral commitments in that regard will be upheld.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is often eclipsed by the glare of security and political challenges. That is unfortunate, as the country continues to suffer from natural calamities, food insecurity and the impact of conflict. We hope that shortfalls in the humanitarian aid provided by the United Nations consolidated appeal for Afghanistan will be rectified as much as possible, so as to limit the negative impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population.

In hosting more than 3 million Afghan refugees, Pakistan is easing the humanitarian burden on Afghanistan at considerable economic and social cost to itself. During the past 10 years, Pakistan's average annual budget for Afghan refugees has nearly doubled. After 10 years of internationally assisted State-building efforts in Afghanistan, more refugees should be repatriated to the country. Creating pull-factors in Afghanistan is part of the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees agreed to in Geneva this year. We look forward to its smooth implementation.

I will conclude by emphasizing Pakistan's abiding commitment to a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. No country has suffered more than Pakistan from the conflict and instability in Afghanistan. No country stands to gain more than Pakistan from normalcy in Afghanistan. We are confident that, through unity and genuine reconciliation, the valiant people of Afghanistan will surmount all pressing challenges to usher in a brighter and prosperous future. Pakistan will remain their committed and steadfast partner.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Head of the Delegation of the European Union, and I would like to add a number of comments in my national capacity.

This year we are celebrating the eleventh anniversary of the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. Spain has shared in that commitment since its inception, contributing a sizable military and civilian force in an unequivocal desire to help stabilize and reconstruct the country. The human cost to Spain's military contingent up to now has been high — 98 killed, 13 in action.

Spain is currently the ninth-largest contributor to NATO's International Security Assistance Force, mandated by the Security Council. Right now, there are 1,500 Spanish military personnel, spread out among Herat province, where Spain operates the airport, Badghis province, which is one of the most inaccessible and disadvantaged provinces in the country and where the headquarters for Spain's provincial reconstruction team is situated in Qala-i-Naw, and Kabul.

Spain firmly supports the Afghan Government's military and civilian initiatives in the complex transitional process. We are now entering the final phase of that process. In order for the transition to be irreversible and sustainable, the international community must redouble its efforts in the coming months, especially in the fields of governance, institution-building and economic development.

In Badghis the transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan authorities is either complete or nearly so in five of the province's six districts, leaving only the Murghab district, where most of the insurgent activity is concentrated. We are pleased with the progress of the transition. Spain remains firmly committed to advising, training and supporting the Afghan security forces during the transition and beyond.

As for civilian aspects of the transition, in our areas of operation we are poised to transfer to Afghans the projects we have developed in the areas of sanitation, professional training, agriculture, female empowerment and water treatment, among others. That transfer in the social sphere will be carried out in tandem with the transfer in the security sphere. The overwhelming majority of those projects are already in the hands of Afghan personnel, and their transfer will be formalized in agreements to be signed with the respective Afghan ministries that will take them over. The end of the first quarter of 2013 will mark the end of the Spanish presence in Afghanistan, after seven years of fruitful collaboration. I underline, though, that Spain will continue to collaborate on projects in a multilateral way, through contributions to various international agencies.

Despite the difficulties of reconciliation, the recent visit by the High Peace Council to Pakistan gives reason to hope that dialogue will soon begin to move towards a sustainable, inclusive reconciliation process that bringings together not only armed groups but all sectors of Afghan society. Such a process would, and must, be

in the spirit of the Afghan Constitution, especially in matters of human rights, particularly those of women and children.

The year 2012 has been one of significant international milestones with regard to Afghanistan. The Chicago NATO Summit in May saw agreement on the strategic plan for Afghanistan, which sketched a new allied mission after 2014 focused exclusively on training. The Summit also generated the general outline of how the international community could support the sustainability of the Afghan National Security Forces post-2014. The Kabul ministerial conference in June pledged that the Istanbul Process — the goal of which is to promote regional cooperation and security and to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan in a regional environment conducive to security and prosperity — would be steadfastly urged forward. Finally, at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan in July, the groundwork was laid for supporting financial security, which is clearly necessary in order to sustain the current democratic regime. For its part, the Government of Afghanistan renewed its commitments in the areas of governance, development, the rule of law, human rights and the fight against corruption.

The presidential elections scheduled for April 2014 will be a rigorous test of logistical organization, as we all know. The international community should provide all possible support to Afghanistan, which, in turn, must ensure the holding of inclusive, transparent and democratic elections with whose outcome the Afghan people can fully identify. The work and assistance of the United Nations will be of paramount importance in those elections.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore the great importance that Spain attaches to the role that the European Union can play in providing assistance to the Afghan authorities in capacity-building in areas such as governance, transparency, the rule of law and the training of Government, police and judicial officials and those related to the country's general socioeconomic development.

For all those reasons, Spain fully supports the ongoing negotiation of an ambitious partnership and development cooperation agreement between the European Union and the Afghan Government. That agreement will undoubtedly guide relations between the two parties in the coming years.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China endorses the statement made earlier this morning by the representative of Tajikistan on behalf of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/354). China also hopes that the relevant draft resolution (A/67/L.16) will once again be adopted by consensus.

In recent years, with the help of the international community and thanks to the tireless efforts of the Afghan people, the peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan has seen progress. The achievements in the political, economic, social and development areas of the country are recognized by all. With the effective strengthening of the Afghan National Security Forces, a good basis has been established for the full handover of security responsibilities.

China firmly supports the efforts of Afghanistan to maintain its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to achieve lasting peace and stability. We welcome the achievements of the people and Government of Afghanistan in all areas. The Afghan peace process is now at a crucial juncture. The establishment of a peaceful, stable, independent and developed Afghanistan in the future requires the joint efforts of that country and the international community.

China supports the leading role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts to resolve the situation in Afghanistan. We hope that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will continue to strengthen its cooperation and coordination with the Government of Afghanistan. In that connection, I would like to underscore the following four points.

First, efforts to achieve peace, stability and development in Afghanistan must be fully owned and led by the Afghan people. We support steps by the Afghan Government to strengthen its capacity-building. While observing full respect for Afghanistan's national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, the international community must support the efforts of that country to increase its capacity-building and improve its governance in order to meet the objective of an Afghanistan governed by Afghans as soon as possible.

Secondly, the reconstruction of Afghanistan must continue and progress in its political process, and economic development, security, stability and national reconciliation must be ensured. It is crucial

that the upcoming general election go ahead smoothly. China welcomes the preparations in that regard by the Government of Afghanistan. We support the leading role of the Afghan Government in the peace and reconciliation process. The transfer of security responsibilities to the Afghan security forces must take place in a gradual and orderly manner and with the goal of ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Thirdly, the reconstruction of Afghanistan requires the international community's ongoing support and assistance. The international community must meet its commitments to assist the socioeconomic development of that country by turning the $16 billion pledged into concrete actions. That assistance must fully respect the priority areas identified by the Afghan Government and must support full implementation of the national development strategy.

Fourthly, the Chinese Government fully supports the establishment of friendly relations with countries in the region on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. At the June summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Beijing, the Afghan issue was discussed and Afghanistan was granted SCO observer status.

China is carefully following the developing situation in Afghanistan. We have always actively participated in the development process of the country. We support Afghanistan's efforts to achieve its development, to improve the well-being of its people and to ensure its peaceful reconstruction in line with the Kabul process. China will continue to support the Government of Afghanistan as far as possible.

China and Afghanistan are friendly neighbours. The Chinese people have strong friendly sentiments towards the people of Afghanistan. China sincerely hopes that Afghanistan will soon achieve peace, stability, independence and development. China is ready to work with the international community and to make its own contribution in order to achieve those goals.

Mr. Abdrabbo (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to extend our thanks to Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his efforts, as well as those of his team, in the past years to achieve greater stability in Afghanistan.

Egypt stresses that stability in Afghanistan has a direct and positive impact on international peace and security in its immediate geographic surroundings, as well as regionally and internationally. From that perspective, Egypt supports the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to exercise full control over its entire territory by 2014 — the deadline for the departure from Afghanistan of the international forces. Egypt is certain that the active and ongoing bilateral cooperation between the two countries to enhance the civilian capacities of the Government of Afghanistan will help accomplish that goal.

Egypt underscores the importance of national Afghan ownership of all programmes established to enhance its capacities, with particular emphasis on those that affect the daily lives of Afghan citizens, given that such programmes will enable the Government of Afghanistan to undertake all tasks entrusted to it by the end of 2014. Increasing national ownership by the Government of Afghanistan of those programmes will enable the Afghan people to reap the dividends of peace, security and stability after decades of conflict and suffering. Taking a long-term approach will help achieve sustainable development in Afghanistan, which is the best means for achieving social stability in the country.

Egypt supports the efforts of the international community to help the Government of Afghanistan, especially the international conferences held during the past year aimed at intensifying cooperation and communication among Afghanistan and its neighbours and to raise the necessary international support and funding for building the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces so that they can extend their control over the whole of the country's territory. Egypt reiterates that it is crucial that Afghanistan's national reconciliation process be inclusive of all tribes and factions. As such, the Afghan experience in reconciling disparate social elements could be held up as a role model of the ability of different factions and tribes to live together, putting the national interests of their country above other considerations.

In conclusion, the problems that face Afghanistan are deeply rooted. The experience of past years proves that finding solutions to those problems will require a collective international effort enlisting the participation of all countries. We look forward to a prosperous future for Afghanistan, based on democracy, pluralism and safeguarded human rights for the Afghan citizens, who have struggled to achieve stability, security and improved living conditions.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to start by expressing our appreciation for the convening of this discussion on a subject of great significance to us, our region and the world. Let me also convey a warm welcome to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš. We thank him for his work as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report detailing the work of UNAMA and offering his analysis of the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/354). I also express my thanks to the German delegation for coordinating and facilitating the intergovernmental negotiations that have led us to the annual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/66/L.16).

There were significant political developments in Afghanistan during the past year. One important political development is the gradual drawdown of foreign forces. As foreign forces prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of 2014, our efforts should focus on providing assistance and helping Afghanistan in its Afghan-led transition to a stable country. We need concerted international and regional support aimed at laying the foundations for sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Progress on security and development is the key for peace, progress and stability in Afghanistan. Economic cooperation should be speeded up, along with political, security and other confidence-building measures, in order to ensure peace and stability for Afghanistan, and thereby for the entire region.

The withdrawal of foreign military forces from Afghanistan should be genuine. Obviously, the experience of the recent decades of foreign military presence in Afghanistan has taught the lesson that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot be resolved by military means. The continued presence of military forces, under any excuse or pretext, would only add to the instability and violence. The violence in Afghanistan has had a drastic effect on the security and well-being of its citizens. The violence is not caused just by armed extremists, inasmuch as a growing number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan have been caused by NATO operations. All sides should strictly abide by international humanitarian law and relevant international law, so as to effectively protect civilians. Afghanistan is passing through an important phase in its history. The Afghan people are inspired by the prospect of a future free from violence and war. The nation deserves our help as it seeks to take full charge of its destiny.

Another challenge for Afghanistan is the increase in the cultivation of narcotic drugs. According to the *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012*, released in early November by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), total opium poppy cultivation has increased by 18 per cent and now covers 154,000 hectares, up from 131,000 hectares in 2011. UNODC warns that the rise in cultivation has occurred despite the Afghan Government's latest increase in efforts to destroy poppy fields and to help farmers find alternative sources of income. At the same time, the report indicates that prices for opium have remained relatively high throughout 2012, at $196 per kilogram. That provides a strong incentive for farmers to expand their poppy cultivation.

The *Survey* sends a strong message that the international community cannot afford to remain complacent in the face of the problem. A strong commitment is needed from both Afghan and international partners to curb the menace of drug cultivation and drug trafficking, which breed extremism. In that regard, we commend initiatives to fight drugs and the help in that fight offered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We welcomed the triangular initiative among Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan within the framework of the region's counter-narcotics efforts. We also welcomed the regional ministerial conference on counter-narcotics held in Islamabad on 12 and 13 November, which aimed at enhancing regional cooperation to counter narcotics. Taking those efforts into account, what remains is to implement measures to alleviate the serious concerns of neighbouring countries, transit countries of the drug traffic and countries of destination.

The issue of refugees is also a challenge, not only for Afghanistan but also for neighbouring States and the international community. Additional efforts must be undertaken in order to repatriate refugees and ensure that they are reintegrated into Afghan society. In that regard, we welcomed the International Conference on the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees held in Geneva in May and the joint communiqué it issued, aimed at the increased sustainability of returns and continued support for host countries.

At present, more than 1 million Afghan refugees are registered in Iran, while an even greater number

of unregistered Afghans are also living in our country. Afghan nationals have continued to enjoy Iran's educational and welfare facilities, among others, and to benefit from the same subsidies that our own people receive. We once again urge the international community to continue to strengthen and expedite its efforts to create conditions conducive to the sustainable repatriation of refugees and their full rehabilitation and reintegration in their homeland.

The Istanbul Conference and the recent series of high-level meetings have strengthened the long-term partnership between Afghanistan and its neighbours, as well as with its international partners. The process was further crystallized at the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Kabul in June, which set confidence-building measures as a priority. The meetings provided an opportunity to exchange views on how to move forward with regard to establishing a stable and prosperous Afghanistan. We hope that the confidence-building mechanism devised at the Conference and its follow-up meetings will promote results-oriented cooperation among all the countries of the region, aimed at developing Afghanistan's infrastructure in line with the wishes of its people, and paving the way for their long-cherished goal of achieving self-reliance and greater economic prosperity for Afghanistan. The United Nations has a key role in coordinating international and regional efforts in that regard and enjoys our full support.

We believe that capacity-building for Afghan institutions must remain at the heart of international efforts aimed at enabling the Government of Afghanistan to exercise its sovereign authority in all its functions. We are confident that more coherent and coordinated regional efforts, and the fulfilment of their obligations by international stakeholders, will contribute to ensuring Afghanistan's sustainable development and its people's prosperity. Building a sustainable, stable nation is crucial, not only for the future of the Afghan people but also for peace and stability in the region, Asia and the world.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has always firmly supported Afghanistan in its efforts to maintain its national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and to realize enduring peace and stability. We hope that the international community will adhere to the principle of an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process and continue to support the Government and the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to achieve peace and reconstruction and to realize, at an early date, the objective of an Afghanistan governed by Afghans.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Slovakia is pleased to be one of the sponsors of the draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16). We thank Germany for steering the negotiations and facilitating a consensus on the draft resolution, which we hope we will adopt shortly. In our view, it represents a renewed message of encouragement for the Afghan authorities and people, as well as a commitment on the part of the international community. The text covers every aspect of the country's achievements, while acknowledging the challenges that still remain.

Slovakia aligns itself with the statement made earlier on behalf of the European Union. I would also like to highlight some aspects of the issue that are particularly important to my country.

Afghanistan remains a top operational priority for the Slovak Republic. Our troops will continue to be deployed there for as long as the situation requires. In order to help build up Afghan security forces, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has enacted a new mandate extending our contribution to the International Security Assistance Force until 2014. We are also changing the makeup of our forces to better react to and reflect the evolving situation. We are reducing our engineering and guard capabilities and deploying a greater number of instructors, mentors and special forces. The main focus of the changes is on the building and deployment by May 2014 of a special operations task group, which will advise the Afghan army and police.

We also need to continue to build functional and credible Afghan National Security Forces. Now that the National Security Forces have almost reached the anticipated numbers, it is crucial to focus on their quality. As we see it, the main challenge is insider attacks, which have multiple negative effects on the overall situation. The Slovak Republic is ready to consider the possibility of sending civilian experts to the region if required. Our national legislation on the subject, which would allow civilian experts to be sent to participate in international crisis management activities outside the territory of the Slovak Republic, came into force this year.

Apart from our engagement in the area of peace and security, we are expanding all the components of our comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan, which

is among the top three priority country programmes for Slovak official development assistance. For a more objective picture, the amount of our aid should be compared to the size of our country.

We are aware that Afghanistan will need help from the international community even after 2014. There has rightly been a focus on working on longer-term plans, and commitments are in place to help build Afghanistan's political, security and development self-sufficiency. To mention some examples of Slovak engagement, since 2004 we have approved 22 projects for Afghanistan, aimed at building schools in rural areas, providing education for girls and women, and supporting small enterprises, local TV broadcasting, capacity-building and civil society.

The Government of the Slovak Republic has already approved full debt relief for Afghanistan, and is ready to fulfil the pledge it made at the Tokyo Conference earlier this year, which it has since reiterated on several occasions through bilateral channels. We are ready to maintain the levels and modalities of our assistance in years to come while concentrating on the sectors of health care, rural and socioeconomic development and building civil society and security institutions. We believe that through targeted projects that are well coordinated and in line with the Afghan Government's priorities we can improve the daily lives of the Afghan people. Step by step, we can help to reach our common goal of a secure, stable and prosperous country.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Mr. Kubiš, for the dedicated and outstanding work being carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We encourage the Afghan people and Government to strengthen their relations with the United Nations and to use the opportunity for cooperation with the Organization to its full potential. We believe that the central role of the United Nations remains one of the key factors in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Mr. Husain (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada is pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution introduced today on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16), and we thank the German delegation for coordinating the process.

The past year was particularly important for Afghanistan's transition. The conferences that have been held in Istanbul, Bonn, Kabul, Chicago and Tokyo have enabled the international community to demonstrate its commitment to ensuring the security, stability and long-term development of a democratic Afghanistan. For its part, the Afghan Government is committed to enhancing transparency, responsibility and respect for human rights and the rule of law. This year's draft resolution reiterates and further enhances those mutual commitments. We are encouraged to see that it is once again to be adopted by consensus. That consensus is of particular importance during the transitional phase, whose success depends upon the cooperation and support of all partners in Afghanistan.

This year's draft resolution recognizes the role that the regional community plays in the transition and calls upon Afghanistan's neighbours to increase their cooperation in order to combat the Taliban. Paragraph 83 refers in particular to the critical role that regional cooperation plays in ensuring peace, security, stability and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan, while paragraph 85 recognizes the important need to strengthen trust and cooperation between Afghanistan, neighbouring countries and regional partners so that, together, they can combat the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups, including the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban, Al-Qaida, the Quetta and Peshawar Shuras and the Haqqani network.

(*spoke in English*)

That language makes clear the critical role that Afghanistan's neighbours play in the stability and long-term prosperity of the country. Indeed, those who do not support stability in Afghanistan are working against the interests of peace and freedom, and may also be in contravention of Security Council resolution 1368 (2001). Canada also emphasizes the importance of holding free and fair elections in Afghanistan. We recognize that the Government of Afghanistan has already taken steps to reform its electoral system, in the hope of ensuring that future elections will be democratic, transparent, credible and inclusive. Yet more must be done.

We urge the Government of Afghanistan to take immediate action to continue to strengthen its electoral laws and processes in order to ensure that the irregularities and attempted fraud that took place in its most recent presidential and parliamentary elections do not recur. We also urge the international community and donors in Afghanistan to work actively to prevent

fraud before, during and after the elections. That will help ensure that the people of Afghanistan have a voice in the future of their country and that indecision does not prevent the Afghan Government from meeting the demands of civil society and of legitimate political actors.

Transparency and accountability will be essential as we move towards transition, so as to ensure that international assistance is delivered responsibly, efficiently and effectively. Canada reiterates its expectation that the Government of Afghanistan will demonstrate tangible results with the assistance provided by the international community. Specifically, Afghanistan must follow through on the commitments it made during the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan to combat corruption and increase transparency in order to establish more effective and accountable administration at the national, provincial and local levels.

Ms. Murmokaite (Lithuania): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his regular critical reporting on the situation in Afghanistan. I also thank Germany and the sponsors of draft resolution A/67/L.16. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Let me reiterate how much importance we attach to the United Nations efforts in Afghanistan. Given the reconfiguration of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the decrease in resources, a continued debate on the role and responsibilities of the United Nations in Afghanistan is necessary.

We welcome the further consolidation of the commitments to partnership and mutual accountability made by the Afghan Government and the international community at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan. In Tokyo, Lithuania reconfirmed its commitment to continue political support for, and assistance to, Afghanistan in the run-up to 2014 and beyond. Over the past seven years, Lithuania has provided approximately €4.5 million in funding for a wide range of projects. We are determined to keep our development assistance at the current level and to support civilian and military capacity-building efforts after the transition has been completed. Education, health care, good governance and the rule of law are some of the areas in which the Afghan Government has achieved considerable progress and which remain critical for the future of the country. We will continue to work with the Afghan authorities to build administrative capacities, promote rural development, support women's empowerment and strengthen civil society.

My country is also determined to maintain strong support for the reform and further development of a sustainable civilian police force and rule-of-law institutions through the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan. Lithuania has been contributing to that Mission and will continue to do so. The Mission, which is fully integrated into the wider international efforts to reform the Afghan national police, has been working closely to that end with key partners, including the United Nations. Our goal is make sure that its efforts deliver substantial results in the country's provinces. We are convinced that the Afghan National Security Forces are capable of maintaining security in their country, as it is their responsibility and their right to do.

Since 2010, Lithuania has focused on training and providing assistance to Afghan provincial security forces. In line with the objective of handing over full responsibility for security to Afghans by the end of 2014, my country will continue to support Afghanistan on its path towards self-reliance and security. In that regard, our Government has decided to allocate $500,000 annually to supporting the Afghan National Security Forces for a period of three years, from 2015 to 2017.

Afghanistan must maintain the pace of reforms. The development and smooth implementation of national priority programmes, improved transparency and accountability, the fight against corruption, and respect for human rights — in particular the rights and empowerment of women — remain essential elements if international assistance and domestic transformation efforts are to succeed. Prosperity and security grow when neighbours trust each other. Lithuania encourages Afghan efforts to foster international cooperation through the Afghan-led Istanbul Process. In September 2012, my country hosted an international conference under the theme "Afghanistan and the region: practical approaches for sustainable development," which brought together high-level participants from Afghanistan, Central and South Asia and the Nordic/Baltic region.

The conference was an opportunity to share best practices and successful examples of regional integration and cooperation. One of the conclusions drawn by participants in the conference was that free-trade agreements were essential between Afghanistan and its closest neighbours. Gains in education at the national level could be further supported through a regional

network of universities. Regional projects in the areas of energy, communications, border management, the environment and other spheres would bind communities and people together. Free media also remain essential for fostering understanding and a sense of community. Political dialogue must be driven by the future agenda rather than past history.

In conclusion, our commitment to Afghanistan and our support for that country's stability, security and development remains firm now and will continue to be so after the transition period.

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India): At the outset, I would like to express India's appreciation to the President for scheduling this discussion. I also avail myself of this opportunity to commend the German delegation for coordinating the intergovernmental negotiations in an excellent manner, which has brought us the annual draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. As we have for the past several years, we are happy to sponsor draft resolution A/67/L.16, which has traditionally been adopted by consensus.

Major international and regional conferences on Afghanistan were held during the past year against the backdrop of the ongoing security transition. The international community renewed its commitment to peace, security and development in Afghanistan at conferences in Bonn, Chicago and Tokyo, as well as at the regional level in Istanbul and Kabul.

As the Afghan Government assumes responsibility for security and governance, with the drawdown of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by the end of 2014, we welcome the pledges of $16 billion in financial aid through 2015 that were made at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, as well as the commitment to sustain support through 2017 at, or near, the levels of the past decade. At the same time, we are conscious that those figures represent the baseline, or minimum requirement, for Afghanistan to sustain itself.

The Delhi Investment Summit of 28 June, hosted by India, was an important endeavour in directing the focus of regional and international attention towards investing in Afghanistan and its potential to provide economic development and stability to Afghanistan during the transition period.

Amid the drawdown of ISAF and the accompanying economic downturn, it is indeed worrisome that the infrastructure of terror is still intact in the region. The Secretary-General's latest report notes:

> "Little has changed in the underlying dynamics to mitigate a deep-seated cycle of conflict. Furthermore, a diminished international presence will have a significant financial impact in many areas that, at least in the short term, may even exacerbate predatory behaviour". (*A/67/354, para. 62*)

Afghanistan continues to face an existential threat from terrorism, which draws upon ideological, financial and logistical support from beyond its borders. The security situation remains fragile, and there has been a sharp increase in the variety, spread and intensity of attacks by the Taliban and their backers. Moreover, the cross-border shelling of the past few months has caused large-scale disruptions to normal life and has sparked public outrage. The Afghan National Security Forces are ill-equipped to repel that challenge without substantial assistance from the international community. We need concerted action to isolate and root out the syndicate of terrorism, which includes elements of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba and other terrorist and extremist groups.

As Afghanistan takes forward the task of national reconciliation, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Kabul Communiqué, we fully support regional confidence-building efforts as a critical component of international efforts to support the country. Regional cooperation and connectivity are critical for Afghanistan's political and economic progress. The Istanbul Heart of Asia Process is an important step in that direction. To strengthen that cooperation, India has taken the lead in two commercial confidence-building measures under the Istanbul Process.

We are fully cognizant that the economic viability of Afghanistan depends on its fuller integration into its neighbourhood so that it can regain its historical role as a land bridge between South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and Eurasia. The development of transport infrastructure and transit arrangements linking Afghanistan to the north, south, east and west, including through the Chabahar port, would benefit not only Afghanistan but also the entire Central Asian region by creating trade, transit and investment linkages.

Afghanistan and India have a long shared history going back over millennia. The two countries are natural strategic partners by virtue of geography and a common vision of peace and cooperation in the region. Our bilateral relationship is extensive, multifaceted and characterized by high-level interaction. President

Karzai visited India earlier this month. That visit offered an opportunity to review the entire gamut of the bilateral relationship and to discuss regional and international issues of mutual interest. During the visit, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reiterated India's support for Afghanistan during the crucial period of transition up to the end of 2014 and thereafter.

The implementation of the strategic partnership agreement of October 2011 between the two countries has already been set in motion with the convening of the first meeting of the Partnership Council on 1 May. During the past decade, India pledged up to $2 billion in development and humanitarian assistance. We have managed to carry out some of the most economical and cost-effective projects in Afghanistan. The $500 million assistance announced by the Prime Minister of India in May 2011 is being spent from 2012 to 2015. The projects under consideration will be in line with the projects suggested under the national priority programmes of the Government of Afghanistan. The pace and nature of the utilization of present and future Indian assistance will be determined by the preference, comfort level and absorptive capacity of the Afghan Government.

India remains unwavering in its commitment to assist the people of Afghanistan in their endeavour to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous nation. We support the good work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). It is important that amid the cutback in United Nations footprint in Afghanistan and the reconfiguration of UNAMA due to budgetary constraints, all efforts should be made to avoid an adverse impact on its operational effectiveness.

Moving forward, we need to create an enabling environment in which the Afghan people can live in peace and security and decide their future themselves, without outside interference, coercion or intimidation. The international community must continue to work with renewed vigour and unity of purpose to strengthen the efforts of the Afghan Government in seeking solutions that are inclusive and are led by the Afghan people themselves.

Mr. Shin Dong Ik (Republic of Korea): At the outset, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the participating members of the International Security Assistance Force and other international agencies, as well as civil society, all of whom are playing vital roles in building a peaceful and democratic Afghanistan. Over the course of 2012, the partnership between the international community and Afghanistan has further strengthened, while the Afghan Government's ownership and its growing role in security and economic planning have been steadily increasing.

The international community has demonstrated its renewed commitment to the Afghan people beyond 2014. At the Chicago Summit in May and the Tokyo Conference in July, the international community took steps to provide long-term financial support to the Afghan people in their efforts to establish sustainable peace and security and to rebuild their country.

For its part, the Afghan Government committed itself to achieving more efficiency and transparency in its governance at the Tokyo Conference. Efforts have also been made over the past months to enhance its security capability and to formulate its development strategy. In particular, the Government of the Republic of Korea welcomes the Afghan presidential decree issued on 27 July to implement Afghan commitments under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. It is our hope that concrete actions will be followed and positive changes made on the ground. We also welcome the appointment of the new Chair of the High Peace Council in April as an important step in the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process.

As stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/67/354), the transfer of responsibility for security arrangements to the Afghan authorities is progressing as planned. As of now, 75 per cent of Afghanistan's population lives in areas where the Afghan Government takes the lead for security. By mid-2013, the Afghan forces will take the lead in ensuring security nationwide.

As we prepare for the mid-2013 milestone, closer cooperation between the international community and the Afghan Government will become all the more important so that the transition process does not hinder peace and stability in Afghanistan. In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the increasing insider attacks, as they could further affect the long-term prospect for stability in the country. While the Afghan Government should make serious efforts to prevent such attacks, the unwavering support of the international community will be needed more than ever.

At the same time, political reform and good governance by the Afghan Government will continue to remain vital to the successful transition. Building regional cooperation will underpin the stability and the

livelihoods of the Afghan people. Furthermore, in the light of the Afghan presidential election to be held in 2014, it is even more important to make headway in the political process.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been actively supporting Afghanistan's capacity-building, especially since setting up a provincial reconstruction team in Parwan province in 2010. To continue such efforts, following last year's contribution of $50 million to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, the Korean Government will this year contribute an additional $50 million to the Fund, as well as another $50 million to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

Against that backdrop, my delegation welcomes today's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan (A/67/L.16), which embodies the political will of all Member States that support the Afghan people in their political and national reconstruction process. It is in that vein that the Republic of Korea joined in sponsoring the draft resolution as a way of underlining our unwavering support. I would like to reiterate that the Republic of Korea will remain committed to working with the Afghan people and their Government, as well as with the international community, to build a more prosperous, secure and democratic Afghanistan.

Ms. King (Australia): Australia welcomes the opportunity to sponsor the General Assembly's draft resolution on Afghanistan (A/67/L.16) again in 2012. This was a crucial year for the partnership between Afghanistan and the international community, during which we made strong commitments to support Afghanistan's future. That partnership rests on mutual assurances between the Afghan Government and the international community — that the Afghan Government will lead its people towards a stable, secure and self-sufficient State, and that the international community will continue to support Afghanistan during the transition and beyond.

As Australian Prime Minister Gillard noted in her speech to our Parliament last month, 2012 has seen significant progress in planning beyond transition, with a comprehensive international framework for supporting Afghanistan beyond 2014 now in place. Australia too has made significant commitments in that regard. We have established important agreements this year to underpin and strengthen bilateral relations. Prime Minister Gillard and President Karzai signed a comprehensive long-term partnership in May that establishes a broad framework for bilateral cooperation beyond the transition. In July, Afghan and Australian ministers also signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Development Cooperation.

Australia has increased its financial and development assistance beyond 2014. Our development assistance will increase from $165 million to $250 million per year by 2015, and we will provide $100 million per year to sustain Afghan National Security Forces sustainment from 2015 to 2017.

Throughout the transition period, Australia will continue to provide support to Afghanistan, centred on Uruzgan province, where we lead the provincial reconstruction team and where, in October, we assumed command of the combined team. In the latter framework, Australian troops, diplomats and aid workers cooperate and work in partnership with their Afghan counterparts on a daily basis.

In 2012, the Afghan Government itself has made significant commitments. The year ahead will see Afghanistan implement reforms to improve governance, prepare for the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015, bolster anti-corruption efforts and promote and protect human rights. We commend the revitalization of the High Peace Council and its efforts to work towards a political solution, including through the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. The international community, particularly the United Nations, has a key role to play in supporting those efforts, and the peace process must include all sectors of Afghan society and involve the active participation of women.

Australia welcomes the agreement between Afghanistan and the international community enshrined in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. Implementing those principles and goals should guide our partnership next year, in 2014 and throughout the next decade.

Afghanistan has already shown demonstrable progress. We welcome the Independent Election Commission's announcement, endorsed by President Karzai, that the presidential election will be held on 5 April 2014. A credible, inclusive and transparent presidential election will be essential to political transition in Afghanistan and will mark the significant progress made over the last decade.

We are pleased to see that the General Assembly draft resolution before us welcomes the recent progress. But it also realistically highlights the challenges that Afghanistan and the international community continue to face. At the most fundamental level, we must continue to ensure that Afghanistan will never again become a safe haven for international terrorism. We all have a stake in preventing the return of international terrorism to Afghanistan.

We also need to continue the fight against narcotics and drug trafficking. We must persist in efforts to promote regional cooperation through bodies such as the Heart of Asia group of countries. And we must continue to encourage anti-corruption reforms.

Australia welcomes the emphasis placed in the draft resolution on support for Afghanistan's efforts to protect human rights, particularly those of women and girls, to organize elections and, of course, to provide security to the Afghan people. All of those efforts will be Afghan-led, and the draft resolution rightly emphasizes that. But it also demonstrates the international community's ongoing support for Afghanistan's own efforts.

The United Nations continues to play a critical role in Afghanistan's long-term development and stability. We welcome the central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts to support human rights, governance and the rule of law, preparations for elections, humanitarian assistance, reintegration and counter-narcotics efforts.

We again welcome the Secretary-General's assurances in his quarterly report (A/67/354) that, despite the reconfiguration of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), coupled with a significant reduction in its resources, the United Nations commitment to Afghanistan remains steadfast. Australia continues to strongly support UNAMA's mandate.

My Government has made Afghanistan's development and stability a key priority. Australia's term on the Security Council will coincide with a critical time of transition in Afghanistan and with our continued efforts to implement a comprehensive framework for Afghanistan's future. Australia remains committed to working with the Afghan Government, the Afghan people and international partners to achieve the common goal of a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 38. The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/67/L.16.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since draft resolution A/67/L.16 was submitted, the following countries have also become sponsors: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Eritrea, Greece, Haiti, Indonesia, Malta, Micronesia, Morocco, New Zealand, Palau, Peru, the Philippines, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uzbekistan.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.16?

Draft resolution A/67/L.16 was adopted (resolution 67/16).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 38?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.